

Sage Hens Killed on Highway

The writer has had an opportunity to observe the animals killed on the motor highways in various parts of the nation during the past year. To my surprise I have found several species of snakes, frogs, toads, salamanders, rabbits, squirrels, mice, porcupine, badgers, opossum, magpies, English sparrows, night hawks, pheasants, and sage hens killed by the automobile. Among the birds is a species that is becoming rare in Utah, the sage hen, *Centrocercus urophasianus* (Bonap.). Thirteen young birds, about half grown, were found crushed to death on U. S. Highway 40 between the head of Daniels Canyon and Fruitland, in Wasatch and Duchesne Counties, Utah. These were observed while traveling over the road three times, once in July and twice in August. Old birds with their flocks were fairly common along this part of Highway 40 during this period. They move about crossing back and forth over the road in search of insects and seeds. In doing so they are easy marks for the fast driving motorist. On highways where traffic is heavy the carcasses of animals are soon ground to dust. In intervals of one week I have found that the bodies of rabbits have been worn away and have disappeared from the highway. Magpies and crows feed on the highway kill.

I call attention to this loss of sage hens since this species is protected in this area. The annual mortality must be high, judging from the kill noted above. Signs warning motorists of the presence of sage hens may be of some value in reducing the loss of this species.—Vasco M. Tanner, December, 1946.